

China's Mega-City

I got a free copy of Fifth Estate in December. Have you read this? I wasn't even aware of the Fifth Estate. Growing up, just north of Detroit, we picked up Canadian stations and there was a half hour news/talk program called Fifth Estate that we picked up from Windsor on tinfoil rabbit ears. But that Fifth Estate was nothing like this Fifth Estate.

One article in particular caught my attention, written by Bellamy Fitzpatrick formerly of West Oakland's Free Radical Radio. It's called "Mega-Cities, the Fifth Horseman of Arcology." In it, Bellamy presents the recently-announced Chinese government plan to construct a "mega-city" around the Chinese capital, Beijing. They're calling this mega-city Jing-Jin-Ji.

So, some statistical data about this mega-city... It's projected to span 82,000 square miles. That means this singular city would be the size of Kansas. Kansas! Ten percent of China's current population would live there.

We're talking about the single most-massive artificial environment ever conceived. This is a dystopia on a grand scale.

Think about what this means. This mega-city would be more like a giant, industrial prison, a vast nightmare of humans boxed up in aisles and rows of cages with plexiglass windows looking out onto the smog and toxification. We're talking about an environment that distorts and destroys humans in fundamental ways... multiplied and expanded on a scale like never before.

Bellamy presents a word I hadn't seen used before as he describes the human city as "CAFO." "CAFO" is an acronym for "Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation."

With what we know of urbanization, the creation of any city is the creation of a "dead zone," a space of land that can no longer sustain life. So, with the immediate landscape of a city-scape murdered, the population of that urban environment must be sustained and maintained by vast amounts of resources shipped in from the outside. That is, because you cannot grow corn in Manhattan, you gotta ship it in from outside, creating greater stresses and strains on other landbases to sustain not just the life that occupies it, but the lives of the urban dwellers as well.

So, when we think about that dynamic and when we imagine 130 million people crammed into a single mega-city, a single sprawling dystopia, think also about how the agrarian world surrounding that monster metropolis will be burdened. We are essentially talking about the reinvention of swivelization, a new model of cramming humans into smaller spaces, more densely packed and more hopelessly dependent completely on the resource distribution network, the delivery of basic necessities like food and clothing, by an even more centralized control system.

The spaces where we exist are being re-engineered into something that looks more and more like an industrial feedlot for chickens. We now face the very probable reality where a generation of millions of humans will be born, live, and die without ever having ventured beyond the boundaries of a single city, without having seen with their own eyes a natural environment containing trees and dirt and wildlife.

Having run out of natural spaces to conquer for expansion, the swivelization program now seeks to condense life itself, become more compact, even as its excesses foreshadow its doom, its edges unraveling in obvious ways.

Perhaps this Chinese super-city will serve as swivelizations last hurrah, a giant concrete eyesore that would be visible from space if only the denizens of the next Neolithic had ambitions to float around out there. Hopefully, by the time the engineers with the big big brains cut the ribbon on Jing-Jin-Ji, the natural world will already be nibbling around its edges and those engineers will have the dubious distinction of having created the largest abandoned ruins in the history of hierarchy.

This is anarchist prisoner Sean Swain from somewhere inside Ohio's torture complex. If you're listening you ARE the resistance.